



ICDF Networks

October 2017

Dance Movement Therapy and Healing



Photo: Provided by Cynthia Newland

Psalm 30:2 “LORD my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me.”

The ICDF Dance Movement Therapy & Healing Network is made up of people throughout the world who facilitate healing for individuals and communities through the use of dance / movement and other expressive arts.

Our members include: performers, choreographers, storytellers, dance/ music/ art and drama therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, counsellors, social workers, psychologists, psychotherapists, mental health, disability, aged care, rehabilitation and community workers, nurses, teachers, pastors, missionaries, youth and children’s ministry workers.

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Names of God Embodied Prayer

Cynthia Newland, MFA is the founder of Alible3 (alible3.com), a dance professional, educator, health and wellness consultant. In this contribution she gives a description of a Healing Workshop that she presented.

Encountering God is a privilege, and beginning to understand the vastness of God's characteristics and attributes is humbling, inspiring and life giving. We are given so much information, details and description about the names and titles of God via the numerous biblical passages, spanning Genesis through Revelations. Being a person, made in the image of God, and a Christian housing in our vessel the Spirit of God, we are given a unique opportunity to encounter our Maker through embodied experiences.

One such exercise involves the various names of God printed on cards. We scatter these around the floor and the participants take a "get to know You" journey, walking and weaving through the names and prayerfully



asking God to reveal His identity in new, unique and specific ways. As instrumental music is playing, creating a warm and inviting environment, I ask the participants to select one name to meditate upon. Then through verbal prompts I encourage the participants to ask God to reveal the significance of this name for the individual and to prayerfully receive and respond via embodied prayer. For example, if a person is meditating on the name Jehovah-Rophe, "The Lord Who Heals", he or she can reflect on an area in their life or a physical place on or in their body that needs the healing touch of God. As they experience the ministry of Jehovah-Rophe, he or she can sweep their hand(s) near or onto the place for petitioned healing and allow their

body to respond, receiving the Healer's presence and touch. Also, I encourage participants to offer embodied appreciation and thankfulness to God for the magnificence of His diversity and ability to meet us in our every situation and need.

After some time (possibly 5-10 minutes) meditating on that name, I encourage the attendees to journey to another location in the room and meditate on another name. Depending on your allotted time, participants may have the opportunity to focus on one or multiple names of God. I would encourage you to not make this a hurried experience. For some it takes time soaking in the understanding of the significance of this aspect of God that may be new to the individual.

Generally, allowing time to verbally respond following this embodied prayer time is quite beneficial. This allows participants to communicate about their personal encounter as well as be encouraged by others and their intimate experience with God in His vast identities.

God desires for us to know and worship Him. This is one beautiful way, inspired by the scriptures to engage with a relatable and an approachable God.

Cynthia Newland

Found in the scriptures there are dozens of names for God including but not limited to the following;

ADONAI [ædɒ'nar; ah-daw-nahy]: "Lord" (Genesis 15:2, Judges 6:15)

ELOHIM [el-oh-heem]: God "Creator, Mighty and Strong" (Genesis 17:7 and Jeremiah 31:33)

EL SHADDAI [el-shah-dahy]: "God Almighty," "The Mighty One of Jacob" (Genesis 49:24 and Psalm 132:2,5)

EL ELYON [el-el-yohn]: "Most High" (Deuteronomy 26:19)

EL ROI [el-roh-ee]: "God of Seeing" (Genesis 16:13)

YHWH / YAHWEH / JEHOVAH [yah-way / ji-hoh-veh]: "LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4 and Daniel 9:14)

YAHWEH-JIREH [yah-way-ji-reh]: "The Lord Will Provide" (Genesis 22:14)

Body Shapes Speak Stories of Breast Cancer Experiences!

With October being the month of breast cancer awareness, we found it fitting that Angela Leung (Dance Movement Therapist –DTAA Associate Member) shared with us a study that she did in 2013 on breast cancer experiences.

Female breast cancer is a worldwide issue nowadays. The disease affects women not only physically but also psychologically and spiritually. What really are the experiences and feelings of the women who are facing breast cancer? As a dance movement therapist, I am really interested to understand how the women's bodies tell their life stories with breast cancer.

In 2013, I have conducted a research with 20 women with breast cancer in Hong Kong. My rationale is that every person is an agent to make sense of the world. Therefore I developed a qualitative study to collect verbal and non-verbal data from the participants. It is a movement-based focus group. I went through many articles and had a literature review on the topics such as female breast cancer, embodiment, dance movement therapy, transition. The basic belief of this research is that expressing through dance movement enables a person to discover the experiences that have been stored in the body.

The movement-based focus group lasts for about two and half hours. The contents include warm up and relationship building, dance movement activities to explore the experiences of breast cancer from the time of diagnosis to the time of completion of all primary treatments, self reflection on different stages, cool down and group discussion. The questions in the focus group interviews explore women's bodily experiences, their relationship with self and others, their feelings, the meanings and thoughts they gained from the breast cancer experiences.

The research findings revealed that women went through changes and had transformation after the breast cancer experiences. Their drawings also showed the stories of transformation. Here is an illustration of a participant's drawing.



Figure 1. Drawing of Body Shapes showing transformation at transition period by a participant

Figure 1 indicates the drawing of both a reaching out and the bended body shapes of the woman. It shows that a person simultaneously has a feeling of reaching out towards the front and crouching down hidden at the back. From the transcript, participant Mary said, "And at this moment, I am relaxed, peaceful and have a feeling of reaching out to search for something." The drawing shows an outline of a crouched shadow hidden under the flower. Mary also indicated that during transitional period there was both a feeling of reaching outward as well as a feeling of hiding behind a protected place. She was in a state of mixed feelings and thoughts. The body shapes in the drawing reflect Mary's transformation, moving from a bended crouch shape towards an open body shape.

As a conclusion, this innovative research methodology with dance movement in the focus group has shed lights on how body shapes tell stories of experiences of these women with breast cancer.

Angela Leung

Dance therapy – an adjunct to other therapies

Diane Hobelaid, (Occupational Therapist, Dance/Movement Therapist, Therapy Explorations) is one of the regular contributors to the ICDF newsletters. In this article she writes about working with children who are struggling with anxiety.

As an occupational therapist, with dance/movement therapy training, I have been delighted to add the DMT skills to my toolkit of therapeutic skills. Not only do the methods of relating and connecting to clients work well in establishing a therapeutic relationship, but the use of metaphor also assists in helping clients make shifts in their stuck places.

This past year, I found I had a number of children diagnosed with anxiety, among other things, on my caseload. Many of them had sensory and perceptual problems which made them uncertain of their physical motor skills in space. A number of them also had high functioning autism. I decided to run a group for six weeks that used movement metaphors while teaching skills for activating the parasympathetic nervous system to calm anxiety.

The group consisted of six children (four girls and two boys). They were all in the nine to ten year old age range. Each week we came together and moved, first through some warm up movements, and then explored a theme. An example of one theme was being in the jungle – we built shelters from large cloth pieces, used dowels as walking sticks, guns and firewood as required. Our music took us through a day of hiking in the jungle, setting up camp, eating dinner, and into the night with all the night sounds.

There the evidence of gender differences became evident. As the boys and girls took turns “keeping guard” the girls sought out jungle animals in distress, and brought them to their tents to tend, while the boys heard jungle animals and sought to kill them! The boys went so far as to sneak into the girls’ tent and kill their protected animals, leading to great distress. Attempting to guide some logic in this situation, to avoid bloodshed, I intervened at which point the children turned to me and said: “You do know this is just pretend, right?” A great laugh for me! They did a fine job of resolving the conflict.

In the course of the group we also worked with pushing, pulling, learning body awareness and assertiveness skills. We identified strengths as well as fears and, through movement, explored feelings of capacity and fear linking them together and thereby developing the children’s control over feelings.

To enlarge the scope of movement in a safe place for these children was to enlarge their capacity for confidence and willingness to experiment and learn. In future, I would extend the group to ten weeks and I would extend each session to one and a half hours to allow for longer periods of resolution in each session’s scenarios. And the greatest take home from the group was that the parents need a group of their own, to help them parent anxious children, and to expand their capacity for facing the fear and doing it anyway!



Photo: Painting by Henri Rousseau

Diane Hobelaid

The ICDF Dance Movement Therapy & Healing Network:

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- dialogue
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